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## Downing Square

2 messages

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Jeff Maxtutis <JMaxtutis@beta-inc.com>

Thu, Mar 10, 2022 at 3:16 PM

To: George Stephans <gsfsjcb@verizon.net>

Cc: "laura.swan.tac@gmail.com" <laura.swan.tac@gmail.com>, "DAmstutz@town.arlington.ma.us" <DAmstutz@town.arlington.ma.us>, "shoji.takahashi@gmail.com" <shoji.takahashi@gmail.com>

Hi George,

I am Jeff Maxtutis, Vice Chair of the Arlington Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). Sorry for the delay in replying to your comment you submitted regarding Downing Square transportation issues. I have copied your comment below and have copied other members of the TAC Executive Committee.

**Comment from George Stephans.** I am writing about the very confusing situation at Downing Square. Cars going north on Park Ave will sometimes stop when they don't need to and cars on the other roads will often pull out in front of cars going north at Park Ave. A few suggestions to improve the situation: -> Add a Stop sign on Park Ave north and label every Stop sign at that intersection as "All Way" -> Put a sign at Park Ave north saying "Do not stop", signs on Lowell and Westminster heading east saying "Traffic from right does not stop", and signs on Lowell and Bow heading west saying "Traffic from left does not stop". -> Ideal, but expensive: Put a traffic light which is always green for Park Ave/Park Ave Extension both ways and red everywhere else, except when a car actually came up to the intersection. In terms of timing, the green lights for Westminster, Bow, and Lowell heading west could be short, with the one for Lowell heading east being a bit longer.

### Response

Downing Square is a confusing six-way intersection with Stop control on five approaches. Beginning back in 2004, the TAC in cooperation with the Planning and Public Works Dept, began evaluating Downing Square. In 2005, temporary bump-outs and a raised crosswalk across the south leg of the intersection (Park Ave) were tested. The speed hump was used to simulate how Yield control would work for the northbound approach to the intersection. While the curb extensions were successful, the raised crosswalk did not work well as long northbound vehicle queues backed upstream through the Mass Ave signalized intersection.

In 2007 we began a study to evaluate options to improve safety for all modes. The options included:

1. Tighten corners with bump-outs, make pedestrian ramps ADA-compliant, add Stop lines, change on-street parking from angled to parallel, add a flashing beacon and signage, add street lighting, repave intersection
2. Redirect Bow Street to intersect with Lowell St east of the Square
3. Make Westminster One-Way out of the square
4. Signalize the intersection
5. Redirect Bow into Lowell and disconnect them from the Square
6. Redirect Bow and Signalize (Options 2 and 4)
7. Redirect Bow, Westminster One-Way and Signalize (Options 2, 3 and 4)
8. Redirect Lowell east to Bow, with and without signalization

Each option would also include optimization the timing at the Mass/Park signalized intersection.

We collected new traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle volumes at the intersection, reviewed crash data, observed operations, and had a robust public engagement process with residents and abutters. We performed intersection capacity analysis for the options with the help of a transportation consultant. This included developing a traffic analysis model to evaluate traffic delay, queuing, and Level of Service. Pros and cons of each option were summarized and compared.

Any of the options with a new signal did not perform well. The intersection was forecast to experience significant delay and queuing of vehicles and long wait times for pedestrians, being a function of having multiple signal phases to accommodate a six-way intersection. The options with redirecting roadways all had significant impacts, including taking private property for some.

Although we recognized that option 1 would not totally “fix” the intersection, it did provide safety, parking, landscape, and accessibility improvements over the existing condition. Attached are two documents that summarize the work performed and recommendations:

- TAC Downing Square Recommendations to BoS, 10/5/2009
- TAC Downing Square Update to Bos, 2/12/2012

I think the improvements were constructed around 2013-2014.

I do agree that some additional signage alerting drivers that the northbound approach does not stop may be helpful. We will discuss this in the near future.

Let me know if you have any other questions or want to discuss further,

Respectfully,

Jeff Maxtutis

TAC Vice Chair

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The following is a copy of an email message that was received from a person who is not a member of the group. The email message was received from a person who is not a member of the group. The email message was received from a person who is not a member of the group.

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**2 attachments**



**091005\_Downing\_Square (1).pdf**

1399K



**120206\_Downing\_Square\_Upda.pdf**

1017K

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**GEORGE STEPHANS** <gsfsjcb@verizon.net>

Tue, Sep 27, 2022 at 9:57 PM

To: Jeff Maxtutis <JMaxtutis@beta-inc.com>

Cc: George Stephans <gsfsjcb@verizon.net>, "laura.swan.tac@gmail.com" <laura.swan.tac@gmail.com>, "DAmstutz@town.arlington.ma.us" <DAmstutz@town.arlington.ma.us>, "shoji.takahashi@gmail.com" <shoji.takahashi@gmail.com>

Hi Jeff,

I was reminded of this earlier exchange when I saw a very similar intersection on a trip out of town. I have also continued to observe very regular incidents of near collisions and/or confusion at Downing Square. At the intersection I saw in the other town, there was the following signage:

- On the equivalent of Park Ave Ext northbound, there was a large sign underneath the pedestrian-crossing diamond sign which said "Do NOT Stop Except for Pedestrians". The yellow diamond pedestrian sign was a bit higher than normal to make the sign underneath it more visible.
- On the equivalent of Park Ave Ext southbound, there was a large sign underneath the Stop sign saying "Oncoming Traffic Does NOT Stop".
- On the side streets, there were large signs underneath the Stop sign saying "Traffic From Right [or Left] Does NOT Stop".

Note that all of the signs at that intersection aused all caps for "NOT", but perhaps that is a bit excessive.

I only saw this intersection a handful of times, so I cannot say if it consistently avoids the confusion that is pervasive at Downing Square. However, it did seem to me that these signs gave everyone approaching the intersection a very clear message about the expected traffic flow.

I don't remember seeing anything similar to that "Do Not Stop" sign in this area, but there are lots of examples of signs saying something similar to "Cross Traffic Does Not Stop".

Cheers,  
George

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